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V. Ward, on the Duties
of Husbands & Wives

1809

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A
SHORT ESSAY
ON THE DUTIES OF
HUSBANDS AND WIVES,

ILLUSTRATED AND CONFIRMED

BY SUITABLE

PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE.

BY

VALENTINE WARD.

“Marriage should be considered as the most solemn league of perpetual friendship; a state from which artifice and concealment are to be banished for ever, and in which every act of dissimulation is a breach of faith.”—DR. JOHNSON.

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Marriage

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE substance of the following short Essay was written in June last, and presented to a young female who has since become the wife of the Author. No idea was then entertained of its being made public, and the strongest inducement to this at present is, a desire that it may be rendered useful to those who have neither means to procure, nor time to peruse, longer and better treatises on the same subject. Should any family be better regulated, or made in any degree more happy by means of this feeble effort, let all the praise be given to HIM from whom cometh every good and perfect gift.

Liverpool, January 20, 1809.

THE HISTORY OF THE

AMERICAN PEOPLE

The history of the American people is a story of struggle and achievement. It begins with the first settlers who came to this land in search of a better life. They found a land of opportunity, but also of hardship. They fought for their freedom, and they built a nation. The story of the American people is a story of the pursuit of the American dream. It is a story of the triumph of the human spirit over adversity. It is a story of the power of the American people to create a better world for themselves and for the world.

The American people have a rich and diverse heritage. They are a people of many cultures, many languages, and many traditions. They are a people who have made great contributions to the world. They are a people who have the courage to face the challenges of the future. They are a people who have the wisdom to learn from the mistakes of the past. They are a people who have the strength to build a better future for themselves and for the world.

The history of the American people is a story of hope and optimism. It is a story of the belief that a better world is possible. It is a story of the belief that the American people have the power to create that world. It is a story of the belief that the American dream is within reach. It is a story of the belief that the American people can make a difference in the world.

A
SHORT ESSAY, &c.

IT has pleased the Almighty Creator and Supreme Governor of the world to make of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the earth ; and thus to establish, on one common and natural basis, friendly intercourse and mutual happiness. He nevertheless saw it necessary to strengthen this fraternal bond by ordaining the marriage contract, and, by this means, to introduce and render permanent among his human offspring the most useful and endearing relations, that by the ties of kindred, affection, and dependance, they might feel the strongest attachment, and evince and maintain the most indissoluble union. That we owe unto all men justice, mercy, and truth, by virtue of our common origin, natural

sympathies, and civil commerce, according to the established order of God : and that these general duties produce a great number of particular ones, of indispensable obligation, arising from our various stations and relations in life, will be readily acknowledged ; yet the momentous duties in domestic life imperiously require our prior attention and regard, and must be punctually and assiduously discharged, if we would expect comfort ourselves, or promote the happiness of those around us.

That domestic quiet is frequently disturbed by a perverse determination not to cultivate domestic virtues, and perform relative duties, is undeniable ; but is it not equally certain that families are often rendered unhappy in consequence of the different members of which they are composed neither understanding their respective obligations, nor considering their vast importance in a religious point of view ?

The conjugal relation being the first in the order of God, it is of the greatest moment

that husbands and wives should understand with the utmost clearness, and perform with the most sedulous attention, every duty which God requires of them, and which their situations demand. Where married persons are thus attentive to the respective duties of their important stations, their children and domestics will be well disciplined and instructed; they will not only be taught the rules of propriety in their behaviour to each other, and all they have any intercourse with, but will also be trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. But where the heads of a family betray an evident want of regard to the Divine authority, and the happiness of their household—where, on the one hand, the master is a petty tyrant, or, on the other, tamely gives up his authority, or is interrupted in his duty by her who ought to be a help-mate for him, nothing better can be expected than disorder and misery.

There are two principles which ought always to operate on the minds of those who are united by nuptial contract—*religion* and

affection ; and wherever these are constant in their operation, they will naturally lead to a close examination, and a prompt observance of conjugal duties. On the contrary, if either of these principles be absent, domestic peace will be often interrupted ; and should neither of them exist, (as is frequently the case,) the best rules whether of human or divine authority, will be utterly unavailing.

For the assistance of married persons inquiring how they may acquit themselves in their important stations with honour to themselves, comfort to their families, and to the glory of God, after pointing out a few obligations common to both, I shall briefly consider the particular duties, first of *husbands*, and secondly of *wives*.—The mutual duties of the greatest consequence, and which ought to begin with their union, and not to end but with death, are FIDELITY, CONFIDENCE, and FORBEARANCE.

I. FIDELITY.—The strong attachment cemented by the union of hands at the

matrimonial altar, and the solemn vows by which married persons are bound to each other, cannot admit of even a lascivious glance; and wherever a desire for criminal intercourse is formed and indulged in the heart, the foundations of domestic happiness are impaired, and the delinquent is exposed to the just displeasure of Heaven. But should the desire end in the actual perpetration of the crime, connubial felicity is completely destroyed, the wretched offender rendered despicable in the eyes of good people, and, unless timely repentance prevent, nothing remains but a fearful looking for of judgment. This, however, is so clear and self-evident as to render enlargement unnecessary; and every good and thinking person must be convinced that the strictest and most undeviating fidelity in every possible way is equally, and on all occasions absolutely binding on both husbands and wives; and for the breach of it no possible recompense can be made. *But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath*

committed adultery with her already in his heart. Matt. v. 28. But fornication and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not once be named among you; as becometh saints. Neither filthiness nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. Eph. v. 3-4.

II.—Very closely connected with fidelity is CONFIDENCE, which, between the husband and wife, should be unreserved and unlimited. An accurate observer and elegant writer, speaking of friendship, very beautifully observes,

“ Reserve will wound it, and distrust destroy; ”

and in the same degree as friendship is either dear or interesting, it is also delicate. As, therefore, human nature, in its present condition, is not capable of arriving at a state of greater endearment than that afforded by connubial friendship, the confidence of those who are thus united should be the most entire: nor should there ever be any but mutual secrets

between them, unless we make the following an exception—that they may, on very particular occasions, keep circumstances from each other which could have no better effect than to operate as so many sources of uneasiness; but these should always be very singular cases, as an habitual reservation in such a state would be contrary to the principles aforementioned, and to the design of God: and should such reserve be discovered, distrust, and various other evils, would be the natural result. Married persons should, therefore, on all occasions, assiduously endeavour to deserve and secure each other's confidence, and each repose in the other's affection and constancy, the most generous and fearless trust. *For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave unto his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh.* Matt. xix. 5.

III.—Nor is either of the above-mentioned excellent qualities more necessary for the promotion and preservation of family comfort than FORBEARANCE. It is very desirable that those who are united by the

honourable and holy bonds of wedlock should resemble each other as much as possible in sentiment, disposition, and practice; for where it is otherwise, without an habitual sacrifice of the will in one or both, domestic quiet will be utterly unattainable. And even those who are most equally yoked, and ardently desire to do right, will find it essential to their happiness to suffer to pass unnoticed almost numberless involuntary and pardonable frailties, which are inseparable from human nature in its present imperfect state.

Should it also happen at any time that the latent sparks of depravity kindle into a sudden flame, and threaten the destruction of domestic enjoyment, the injured partner, instead of increasing the fire by provoking retaliation, should immediately endeavour to extinguish it by the most dispassionate and gentle expressions that the utmost kindness and affection can dictate. There is scarcely any thing more inimical to this duty than that self-approbation and conceit which is one of the most mischievous consequences of ignorance. Let all,

therefore, who wish to enjoy permanent delight in this divinely appointed union, cultivate an intimate acquaintance with their own defects; let them never be too sanguine in their expectations from their companions, and learn either to connive altogether at their habitual infirmities, and occasional faults, or treat them with the most compassionate indulgence :

“ The kindest and the happiest pair
Will find occasion to forbear ;
And something, every day they live,
To pity, and perhaps forgive.”

And be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another. Eph. iv. 32.

Having briefly noticed the duties which are common both to the husband and the wife, I shall now consider those which are peculiar to each. Those of the husband are, **PROVISION, PROTECTION, COUNSEL, and TENDERNESS.** Those of the wife, **REVERENCE, ECONOMY, and cheerful SUBMISSION.**

I. PROVISION.—According to the order established by the great Parent of the universe, and which operates in all well regulated societies, every man ought to provide for those of his own household. Hence arises the impropriety of persons entering into the marriage state who have no probable means of comfortably supporting a family. This should teach parents the necessity of training up their children in habits of industry and frugality; and of putting a trade or profession into their hands, that they may be prepared to fill up their future providential stations in such a manner as to provide for their dependants the necessaries, if not the comforts, of life. There are, indeed, inhuman wretches in the form of men who, when Providence has given them adequate means to supply the necessary and reasonable demands of their families, harden their hearts against the feelings of affection, and even the paramount calls of duty, and by idleness and extravagance plunge them into the most pitiable distress and penury. Every one who feels for the honour and happiness of human society,

must hope that the number of such despicable creatures is small; and it is certain that, as true religion prevails, they will diminish from the earth. Jacob thought it his indispensable duty to provide for his own house. See Gen. xxx. 30.—*If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own household, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel* 1 Tim. iii. 8.

II. PROTECTION.—The superior power and muscular strength given to man are not for destruction, but for preservation; and the person, the character, the health, and the life of the wife, ought always to be so valuable in the estimation of the husband that no risk or sacrifice should appear to him too great for her protection. And if that man deserves not the name of husband who would not endanger his own life in defence of that of his wife, how execrable must be the wretch who, by unfaithful or cruel conduct, saps the foundation of his partner's health, and by rapid or slow degrees occasions her premature dissolution.

So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies: For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth it, and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church. Eph. v. 28-29.

III. COUNSEL.—It would be foreign to my present purpose to enter largely into the controversy respecting the comparative strength of the mental powers of men and women. They are evidently designed by the Great Author of nature, whose works are all right, to occupy very different departments in human life; and those persons, whether men or women, are most excellent who move in their peculiar spheres with the greatest order and regularity. It is, indeed, an opinion received by many, that the judgment in men is more solid, their minds more firm, and their knowledge more extensive, than what is generally found in the other sex. But even those who embrace this opinion are not agreed whether the difference be natural or accidental. However, it appears very desirable, from the situation in which God has placed the man,

that he should be able to counsel and direct his whole family, especially as the woman is instructed *to ask her husband at home, and to learn in silence with all subjection.*

1 Cor. xiv. 35. 1 Tim. ii. 11. And although he may without violating any law of God, or any part of his own engagement, command his wife, yet this should be done as seldom as possible. Men, by making known their wishes in a way of request or advice, will be much more likely to secure the hearts and even the obedience of their wives. *For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church.* Eph. v. 23. *And he sent letters into all the king's provinces, into every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language, that every man should bear rule in his own house, and that it should be published according to the language of every people.* Est. i. 22.

IV. TENDERNESS.—The very acute sensibility and delicacy of feeling common to females, and especially the numerous sor-

rows and afflictions peculiar to themselves, and perhaps, also, the imperfections in the system of their education, all loudly demand from the husband habitual tenderness and affection. This disposition should be so interwoven into his very soul, that it may be evident to her in all his looks and gestures, as well as in all his words and actions.

“For the art of governing like God, is governing by love.” *Husbands, love your wives even as Christ loved the church.*

Eph. v. 25. Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life. 1 Peter iii. 7.

Secondly, we come now to consider those duties which are peculiar to the wife.—

The first of which is REVERENCE. It is not meant by this expression that the wife should be in perpetual fear of her husband, or that she should feel in his presence the awe of a slave; but that a regard for the order of God, who hath made man the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of

the church, should lead her always to treat her husband's situation, his person, and opinion, with the most respectful deference; and no woman can be justified in giving her hand to a man, towards whom she does not feel that esteem which would render this part of her duty equally easy and delightful. *And let the wife see that she reverence her husband. Eph. v. 33. And thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. Gen. iii. 16. All the wives shall give to their husbands honour, both great and small. Est. i. 20. I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence: For Adam was first formed, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. 1 Tim. ii. 12-13-14.*

II. ECONOMY.—As every good husband (unless he should have strong reasons to the contrary,) will naturally entrust his wife with his property, at least a sufficient proportion of it, for the purposes of house-keeping, so every good wife will consider herself accountable, both to God and her

husband, for the manner in which she expends it, and will act accordingly. But a woman who, without the advice, and even contrary to the wishes, of her husband, wastes his money in superfluous and expensive finery in furniture or apparel, and also indulges herself in other extravagances, abusing that confidence which the affection and esteem of the husband has reposed in her, is not only greatly reprehensible, but ought not to consider it an hardship, or an undue exercise of power on the part of the husband, if he refuse in future to entrust her with his property. *Every wise woman buildeth her house; but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands. Prov. xiv. 1. In like manner, also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety, not with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array, but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. 1 Tim. ii. 9-10. I will, therefore, that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give no occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. 1 Tim. v. 14. That*

they may teach the younger women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. Tit. ii. 4-5.*

III. SUBMISSION.—A pious, prudent, and affectionate wife will be so far from thinking it a hardship to submit to the will of her husband, that she will in general anticipate his wishes, and feel the greatest pleasure in contributing to his happiness; and if he should be unreasonable in his demands, though she may with great mildness and good temper urge strong arguments and use

* For a beautiful description of an industrious economical wife, see the 31st chapter of the book of Proverbs; and should this small Essay fall into the hands of any female who would think these employments too menial, let her look into Rollin's Antient History, vol. 5, p. 225, and there she will be informed that the clothing worn by Alexander the Great was wrought by the hands of his own sisters. And it is said that an exalted personage, in our own country, is frequently employed in making garments for poor children.

expostulations, yet, should he still remain inflexible, it is her duty to obey, except the command be unlawful. *Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord. Eph. v. 22. Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. 24. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands as is fit in the Lord. Col. iii. 18. Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that if any obey not the word, they may, without the word, be won by the conversation of the wives, while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For in this manner, in the old time, the holy women who trusted in God adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands. 1 Pet. iii. 1-5.*

To conclude, let it be practically remembered by all married persons, that closet and family prayer are essential parts of their duty; and when their mutual fervent petitions ascend up daily before the throne of God, the divine blessing will be always experienced. But where family prayers are hindered by family feuds, certain misery ensues. Let, therefore, both husbands and wives never forget, that their individual and mutual happiness depends on their enjoying the divine favour, and not on the possession of any worldly good.

Finally, as married persons are necessarily uncomfortable where their words and actions show them to be at variance, so they cannot fail of being happy while they live in habits of solid piety, and where their whole deportment evinces *affection, attention, and a mutual desire to please.*

The conclusion of the first part of the
book is all directed towards the
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